

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Introduction

**COAST** is a web based recruitment system that will permit Coast Guard employees and outside job seekers to apply for Coast Guard's civilian jobs online. It will assist the Human Resources Staff in electronically qualifying, rating and ranking job applicants and produce a list of quality candidates for selecting officials.

## General Information

### Q: How does **COAST** work?

A: **COAST** is a service delivery mechanism that automates the federal hiring process. Interested applicants can review vacancy announcements and answer position-specific questions while on the web site. The system also allows applicants to create, edit and archive an electronic resumé. After the vacancy announcement closes, the Human Resources Office uses the system to rate and rank candidates according to pre-established criteria. The best qualified candidates are identified and forwarded to selecting officials.

### Q: What types of positions will be filled using **COAST**?

A: Most General Schedule and Wage Grade positions in the Coast Guard will be filled using **COAST**.

### Q: Is the system secure?

A: Yes. Even though Quick Hire hosts the application, **COAST** is run on a private secure database and the U.S. Coast Guard is the owner of the data. The system meets the Agency's stringent security requirements and a Security Plan has been approved.

### Q: What if I don't have a computer?

A: Most career resource centers, unemployment offices, public libraries, college placement centers and job search agencies have computers and Internet access for their patrons to use at no charge

### Q: What if I don't have email?

A: There are several Internet Service Providers that offer free email accounts, such as Hotmail, Lycos and Yahoo. You can access one of these providers to register for a free email account.

### Q: What if I need help applying online?

A: For assistance in applying for a *COAST* vacancy, you may contact the *COAST* Help Desk. The telephone number is listed on the vacancy announcement.

**Q: When exactly do jobs close in *COAST*?**

A: *COAST* positions close at midnight Eastern Standard Time on the closing date of the vacancy announcement. After midnight, jobs that have closed will not be available for view or application.

**Q: Exactly what does it mean to apply online?**

A: You submit your application using the Internet. When you first access the system at the web site, you must establish an account by answering a set of core federal questions. The system will assign you a user ID and password, which can be changed. The core federal questions will be stored in the system and will be used by the system as a part of the initial screening, e.g., for determining current status, veterans' preference, highest grade held, reinstatement eligibility, minority and handicap status, email and street address, phone number, and other relevant information.

**Q: Will the U.S. Coast Guard accept paper applications?**

A: No. If you are applying for Public Status positions and Internal positions, you must apply on-line if the position is advertised using *COAST*. If you are applying for Public Non-Status positions advertised using *COAST*, exceptions will be made in the instance of extreme hardship cases (e.g., applicant lives in a remote area where it would pose a major hardship for the applicant to get to a computer in any location). The *COAST* Help Desk will assist applicants in any way possible to submit their applications online by the closing date of the vacancy announcement. Applicants who meet hardship criteria will be requested to respond to the same questions as applicants applying online and submit a signed copy to be received in the HR Office prior to the closing date of the vacancy announcement. The HR Office will input the data into the system on the applicant's behalf for the specific job for which the applicant is applying.

**Q: What if someone submits false information?**

A: *COAST* is a Federal job application system. Providing false information, creating fake IDs, or failing to answer all questions truthfully and completely may be grounds for not hiring, for disbarment from Federal employment, or for dismissal after a person begins work. Falsifying a Federal job application, attempting to violate the privacy of others, or attempting to compromise the operation of this system may be punishable by fine or imprisonment (see US Code, Title 18, section 1001.)

## **Applicant/Employee Information**

**Q: Can I be automatically notified of U.S. Coast Guard civilian vacancy announcements?**

A: Yes. *COAST* allows applicants to automatically retrieve email notification if this option is chosen when you establish an account in the system.

**Q: After I have established an account, am I required to apply for a vacancy every time I go into the system?**

A: No. Once you have established an account, the system uses the information to determine the vacancies for which you are eligible to apply. You may scroll through the vacancy, including the questions, but you are not required to transmit anything. You can merely exit the system or return to the main menu to select other vacancies to view.

**Q: As an applicant, can I access the system from home?**

A: Yes. As an applicant, you can access the web site from any location, whether at home or at work.

**Q: Is there a time-out feature in *COAST*? Will I lose everything I have entered if I get timed out?**

**A: There is no time-out feature for applicants**

**Q: Can I create a resumé online?**

A: Yes. Once you have answered the core questions and established your user ID and password, you can then create your resumé. Once created (input into the system), you can go back in at a later time and update or change your resumé. After you apply for a particular vacancy and the vacancy announcement closes, the system automatically attaches your resumé to that particular vacancy announcement. If you later apply for a new vacancy, you may wish to update your resumé at that time to correspond more closely with the new announcement.

**Q: I already have a resumé prepared. Can I load it into the *COAST* system?**

A: Yes. *COAST* allows you to cut and paste your resumé into a specified text box that will accept up to 16, 000 characters. The system currently allows only simple text, and does not accept special formatting, such as bold print and underlining.

**Q: What if I want to submit a long version resumé or additional documents?**

A: Resumés should be brief. However, you should include relevant work experience and your education. Any additional documents may be provided to the selecting official at the time of an interview.

**Q: What happens if I don't submit a resumé with my personal information when**

**applying for a job?**

A: If your resumé is not submitted in the *COAST* system by the closing date of the vacancy announcement, you will not be considered for that position.

**Q: Can I submit my resumé via email?**

A: No. In order to apply for positions in *COAST*, you must log into the system and apply online.

**Q: Is it possible to have multiple identities or more than one email address in *COAST*?**

A: No. You are identified in *COAST* by your Social Security Number, your *COAST* user ID#, and your password which you enter in the registration process. *COAST* will not allow you to create more than one account using the same email address or Social Security Number.

**Q: This is the first time I have ever registered in *COAST* and the system is telling me that someone already registered with my Social Security Number. How could this be?**

A: No one else is using your Social Security Number. You logged out of *COAST* before you finished registering. Login to *COAST* as a registered user, select "Edit Personal Information" and press "Next." You can then complete the registration process.

**Q: I don't understand why the system won't let me in.**

A: Please review the procedures for logging into *COAST*. You must be a registered user of *COAST* before you can apply for Coast Guard civilian jobs. In addition, when asked for a password, choose one that is at least 5 characters long and type it twice, making sure you use the same case both times.

**Q: I tried to login using my email address and it doesn't work.**

A: Try using your *COAST* ID# that you received from the system when you first registered in *COAST*. If you don't have it, you can use your email address, but you must use the same case you used when you originally typed it into *COAST*. For example, if you originally typed your email address using all capital letters, you must use all capitals when trying to login. It is often easier to use your *COAST* ID# instead because it is a number and isn't case-sensitive.

**Q: If the system only accepts online applications, how do I send other attachments,**

**such as my college transcripts, SF-50's, etc.?**

A: Unless otherwise stated on the vacancy announcement, do not send these documents until they are requested. Applicants claiming 10-point veterans' preference will be required to fax or mail all supporting documents to the appropriate office for receipt by the closing date of the vacancy announcement. The hiring manager or HR Specialist may request other documentation from you through email or telephone.

**Q: How is my application rated?**

A: The responses you provide to the questions are the basis for the numerical rating calculated by the system, in accordance with the weighting of questions as determined by the selecting official or Subject Matter Expert, and HR Specialist.

**Q: Where do I enter my knowledge, skills and abilities ?**

A: The position-specific questions used in *COAST* are derived from questions defined by the selecting official in consultation with a Human Resources Specialist, and have been validated by Coast Guard subject matter experts, as appropriate, for the job vacancies in *COAST*. You will supply information on how you meet the qualifications of the position by responding to the position-specific questions in the vacancy announcement. You are rated and referred based on your responses to the position-specific questions as supported by information in your resumé..

**Q: How will the HR Office verify my experience, education or responses to my questions?**

A: *COAST* does not diminish or abolish the HR Specialist's role in verifying qualifications of individuals. The resumé, as well as the interview process can be used to address questionable situations or issues. A review of the resumé will be conducted for all applicants who are referred to the selecting official.

**Q: Since the *COAST* system will rate me according to my self-assessment and response to the questions, what prevents me from selecting those choices which give me the highest scores?**

A: Nothing will prevent you from doing this. However, falsifying or answering questions to mislead the system's automated process is no different than providing false or misleading information on your application under the old process. Applicants are reminded that this is a federal job application system. Providing false information, creating fake ID's or Social Security Numbers, or failing to answer all questions truthfully and completely may be grounds for not hiring you, for disbarment from Federal Service, or for dismissal after being hired. Falsifying a Federal job application, attempting to violate the privacy of others, or attempting to compromise this system is punishable by fine or imprisonment (U.S. Code, Title 18, section 1001).

**Q: I am uncomfortable using my Social Security Number (SSN) to establish my account in the system. Is there any way I can apply for a position online without my SSN?**

A: No. Your SSN is one of the few reliable means that government agencies have of distinguishing one applicant from another. Many applicants have the same name, or may even have the same birth dates. The SSN is the identifier suggested for use by the Office of Personnel Management for Federal job applications, and is the only way we can definitively differentiate between applicants. If someone else attempts to open a new account with your SSN, the system administrator will be alerted that your SSN already exists with a specific User ID and Password and that a new account is trying to be established with the same SSN.

**Q: How do you confidentially collect EEO data from applicants?**

A: Applicants have the option to voluntarily and confidentially enter demographic information when initially registering in *COAST*. To ensure the candidate's anonymity, the data is immediately encrypted and cannot be tied to a specific candidate. Once the vacancy announcement closes, a demographic report can be generated; however, neither the HR Staff nor selecting official is able to associate the demographic data to an individual. The data is also encrypted within the query processing tool. The encryption code is proprietary Quick Hire information, which they will not release.

**Q: If I am not selected for a position, who should I contact to find out why?**

A: If you are found ineligible for a particular position, you will automatically receive an email explaining the reason why.

**Q: Can I apply for jobs in *COAST* using my office computer?**

A: Yes. Coast Guard employees may use their office computers and email to apply for jobs. However, Coast Guard employees are reminded that use of government property/resources to apply for jobs should not interfere with the performance of your regular duties. If you work for another Federal agency or in the private sector, contact your employer's HR office for information on whether or not this is acceptable.

**Q: Is there any way I can see which positions I have applied for or find out the status of these vacancies?**

A: In order to keep track of the vacancies for which you have applied, you should elect to receive an email confirmation of your application when you apply for jobs in *COAST*. Keep this as a record of your application and save it. *COAST* also has a feature that allows applicants to check the status of a vacancy. Go to the *COAST* main login screen and select "View My Application Status".

**Q: How quickly will my application be rated?**

A: Your application will be rated by the system one minute after midnight Eastern Time on the closing date of the vacancy announcement. However, a quality review will be conducted by the HR Office before the rating is finalized. Prior to the closing date of the vacancy announcement, you can go back into the system and change your responses or update your resumé, as necessary.